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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 001049

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' COMMITMENT TO  
GUAYMURAS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1048

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador urged the Liberal and National party presidential candidates on October 15 to issue a statement in support of the decision by the commissions to the Guaymuras negotiations to refer the Guaymuras Agreement to the Congress, which would be able to consult with other institutions, such as the Supreme Court. The candidates expressed support in principle to referral of the agreement to Congress, but decided to first consult with their party leaders before reaching out to their congressional delegations. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador, joined by PolCouns, met on October 15 with Liberal Party presidential candidate Elvin Santos and National Party presidential candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo. Christian Democratic Party candidate Felicito Avila and Social Democratic Innovation and Unity Party (PINU) candidate Bernard Martinez were invited to the meeting, but both were outside Tegucigalpa. Organization of American States (OAS) Special Envoy John Biehl and former Presidents Carlos Flores and Ricardo Maduro attended the meeting. Biehl provided a readout of the state of play of the Guaymuras negotiations. Biehl stated that both commissions had agreed to have the Guaymuras agreement, including the point regarding restitution of President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya, referred to the Congress with the Congress empowered to consult with other state institutions, such as the Supreme Court. Biehl said the Zelaya commission had requested a break in the talks so that they could discuss this proposal with President Zelaya and had gone to the Brazilian Embassy to do so. Biehl told the candidates that there is already agreement that a restored President Zelaya cannot advocate for a constituent assembly and must support the electoral process.

¶3. (C) Both former Presidents Flores and Maduro expressed approval of the decision to refer the agreement to the National Congress. Flores said it is positive that the commissions have for the first time designated an arbiter (the Congress) and that it is even more positive that they have chosen a Honduran government institution. Flores noted that it was the Congress which removed Zelaya from office. He added that whether that removal was correct or incorrect, it is fitting that the Congress should decide on his restitution. Maduro said both sides would have to abide by the Congress' decision. However, he expressed concern that once the agreement is referred to the Congress, those who remain opposed to Zelaya's restitution will begin agitating

and may receive support in Congress.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador told the candidates that they need to support the Guaymuras Agreement as they have over the last few weeks been supporting the quest for a negotiated settlement to the crisis, without political advantage to any one of them. The Ambassador urged the candidates to make a statement praising the commissions for their efforts to achieve national reconciliation and supporting their decision to refer the Guaymuras Agreement to the Congress.

¶5. (C) Comment. The candidates agreed to support the referral of the Guaymuras Agreement to the Congress, but decided that rather than consulting with their congressional delegations, they would first discuss the issue with their parties' leaders and seek to develop a legislative and political strategy for ensuring that the National Congress ratifies the agreement expeditiously, assuming a final deal is reached today. The candidates appeared to believe that time was running out. End Comment.

LLORENS